



Beep Beep Richie

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Summary:

It was so sudden.

Incredibly sudden in fact. In came out of nowhere.

Richie Tozier was the last person they expected to be having a panic attack and yet...here they were.

Beep Beep Richie

It was so sudden.

Incredibly sudden in fact. In came out of nowhere.

None of them were expecting it. Really. They didn't do it on purpose. It was just an ordinary day despite the sun shining a little too bright and everyone's smiles feeling a little too forced. A lot had changed after It came and none of them were one hundred percent alright. But they were coping. They were getting better. There was nothing serious to talk about. That was something at least. But still...none of them realized that there were certain things they couldn't say. Not just yet. It was still too raw to think about properly. And that was why mistakes were made.

Richie was talking.

No surprises there. He always was. And as usual, it was mindless drivel that didn't really demand any intense listening. Eddie observed him with barely concealed disinterest, head twisted round to see him properly. He loved the guy, sure, but his endless chatter was starting to get on the injured boy's nerves. The topics Richie chose changed as quickly as Bill's moods of late and no amount of whining from Stan was shutting him up. Mike had produced headphones and a battered walkman from somewhere and was napping calmly. Eddie was a little jealous. He had a headache that throbbed behind his eyes and he wasn't happy about it.

"...and then I told him that I'd already brushed my teeth but he went and got my toothbrush and said that it was dry and that meant I hadn't. So I told him that I dried it on a towel afterwards because my main man Eds does too and he totally didn't believe me and tried to ground me for a month for lying but obviously forgot about it ten minutes later because I went outside to buy some gum and he didn't even stop me so..."

"Beep beep Richie." Eddie said tiredly, sick of the chatter and desperate to give his brain a break.

And sure enough, it shut Richie up.

Finally. Peace and quiet. His headache was starting to get worse and who had time for that. Eddie leant back and closed his eyes. The sun felt nice on his face and he wasn't worried about getting burnt since he'd already lathered himself in sunscreen. Mike had the right idea. It was nap time.

"Richie?" Ben sounded worried. "Everything alright?"

He got no answer.

"Hey Eddie, what's up with Richie?" It was Bev's turn to ask speak. Eddie say back up, slightly annoyed at another interruption.

Ben and Beverly had been sitting off to the side of the group, talking quietly about Beverly's current home life situation but now the two were staring at the previously chatty Richie with something akin to fear on their faces.

Eddie twisted to get a good look at his friend, expecting to see him pulling a stupid face or something just for shits and giggles. Instead...

Richie was hunched over, hands knitted in his hair as he pulled the strands tightly. His breathing was short and erratic, not at all unlike when Eddie had his asthma attacks. He was deathly white and his eyes stared blankly ahead. All in all it was a contrasting image. Richie Tozier had never looked like that before and Eddie had never thought he would ever see him like this.

"What the fuck?" Eddie leaned forward to shake Richie. His friend flinched away from his touch, eyes finally breaking away from staring at the ground to dart around sporadically. "Richie, you alright?"

By now, everyone was paying attention to their resident loud mouth. Mike had whipped the headphones off, tense and ready for action. Stan had lowered his bird watching binoculars and even Bill, who'd been off in his own little world before, was nervously biting his lip as his trembling hands reached for Richie.

Richie, who was now doubled over, trying to suck in great gulps of

air and failing each time. He was shaking violently as though it wasn't the hottest it had been all summer. Eddie wanted to reach out and try to shake him out of it but Richie looked so fragile. Would he fall to pieces if Eddie touched him?

"He's having a panic attack." Bev noted, voice slightly hysterical.

Of course. Eddie should've known. He was no stranger to panic attacks. But he'd always figured that someone like Richie would be.

"What happened?" Mike asked, talking to Beverly and Ben since they were the first ones to see that something was up with their friend.

"I dunno." Ben said helplessly. "He was talking about being grounded and then he just stopped really abruptly and then got all pale and shaky. Like he is now."

It was Bill who approached Richie and damn if that didn't upset Eddie. He couldn't help his friend. How lame was that.

"Hey, Richie. It's Bill. Can you h-hear me?" Bill's voice was soft and calm and practically stutter free. He reached out for Richie but didn't touch him, as though he was some wild animal. Eddie shuddered. He felt so helpless.

Richie didn't say anything in return. He just kept shaking horribly, eyes darting around in an almost confused manner, like he didn't know where he was. What had happened to set him off like this? He'd been fine one second and now...

"Richie. I need you to b-b-breathe. You're not doing that right now and you need to. Copy my breathing. In and out. In and out. I know you can hear me."

Eddie watched the scene carefully, eyes on Richie's chest to see if he was doing what Bill said and slowing his breathing down. The nervous kid almost wanted to lend his friend his Ventolin in case it helped. He wanted to do something, anything. This whole thing felt like his fault which was probably ridiculous because he hadn't said anything or done anything to upset Richie. Unless...

"Beep beep Richie."

That was what had shut Richie up and according to Bev and Ben, that was when he'd zoned out and scared them. Had those words somehow set him off or something? Eddie frowned. But why would they? It was just a harmless phrase they used to let Richie know that it was time to slow down and maybe shut up.

But then again, a lot of things that they thought were harmless had become terrifying over the past few weeks because of It. No one had actually sat down and gone over their new fears but they'd noticed things, of course. And if paintings could scare Stan then a few words could scare Richie, right?

"Does it help if we know what caused it?" Eddie asked breathlessly, mind still racing. Richie's breathing was worsening and he was terrified that the bespectacled boy was going to pass out on them.

"M-maybe." Bill stammered. "I'm open to any ideas."

"I think it's what I said to him, before he went all panicky. Those certain words." Eddie said in a rush. "You know..."

"Know what?" Stan looked a little clueless.

Eddie sighed and lowered his voice so that Richie wouldn't hear. "Beep beep Richie."

"But those are just words we use to shut him up." Stan frowned. "Why would that upset him?"

"Well I don't know." Eddie shot back. "But it's the only thing that I can think of."

"Guys he's not breathing." Bill cut in, voice sharp and serious.

"Shit!" Eddie suddenly couldn't think straight. He pushed Bill aside and grabbed Richie's face, pulling it close to his. Richie let out a strangled squeak but didn't even struggle. There they stayed, Eddie holding Richie's face as the boy struggled and failed to breathe. After a little moment, he untangled Richie's hands from his hair and held them in his own.

Think! Think Eddie think! Why would those words have upset him? It has

to be about the clown? But why? Do those words remind him of It somehow?

“What if the clown said it to him?” Beverly burst out. “And what if he’s having a flashback or something?”

“A flashback?” Eddie didn’t look away from Richie.

“People with that medical condition get them.” Bev explained.

“PTSD.” Mike said quietly.

“That’s the one.”

“Richie. Can you hear me?” Eddie wasn’t sure if he was doing this right. Just because he’d had panic attacks himself didn’t mean he knew how to help calm someone down from one. “Blink once if you can hear me.”

Richie didn’t blink but Eddie wasn’t really expecting him to. The boy was too far gone. They had to do something now and fast.

So he leaned back and slapped Richie.

“What the fuck?” He heard Stan whisper in the background.

“Richie Tozier. Blink if you can hear me.” Eddie said again, firmer this time.

Richie blinked.

“Richie, there is no clown here. It is gone. You are safe. We’re in a field. It’s a nice, sunny day. There’s no danger in sight. There’s no clown. You’re safe. You’re with me and Bill and Stan and Ben and Bev and Mike. You’re alright now. Copy my breathing. Blink if you can do this.”

Richie blinked again and his chest begun to rise and fall again, staggered at first before steadying out. Eddie wasn’t sure if he was exactly the best person for the job of copying breathing, all things considered, but he was certainly doing a better job of it at the moment than Richie was.

It seemed like hours passed before Richie was finally breathing normally again. The other members of the Loser's club had backed away to give the two boys space but Eddie was still aware of their presence as they hovered in the background. That was another side affect from dealing with a shit ton of scary things leaping around. He was constantly aware of his surroundings now.

Eddie released Richie's hands, watching carefully for any sign of change in Richie's facial expression. He didn't pick up on one however. Richie was still pale and distracted.

"Richie, you okay?" Eddie asked, trying not to sound too condescending. Richie hated being talked down to like he was a child.

Richie blinked a bit, and then shook his head in a sort of 'I'm trying to clear my mind' way. He reached up with shaking hands to adjust his glasses. Sweat dripped from his brow and his lips were cracked and dry.

"What the fuck happened?" He asked, voice dry and raspy.

"Uh..." Eddie hesitated, turning around to the others for help.

"You had a panic attack." Beverly stepped in to explain once more.

"A what?" Richie stared at her, confused.

"Like what I get sometimes." Eddie answered before Bev could. Richie's expression cleared a little before a dark cloud fell over it. Eddie had a feeling he knew where this was going.

"Yeah, not possible." Richie's words were brave but his voice was weak and his bravado felt flat.

"I said something and it set you off." Eddie went on. Richie was being a stubborn shit like usual but he'd eventually see the truth.

"That being?" Richie tried to raise an eyebrow but failed miserably.

"I'm not saying it in case you panic again." Eddie said firmly.

“Dude, give me more credit than that.” Richie sneered a little. “Why you gotta be so paranoid all the time?”

“Oh I dunno, because the world is terrifying and I’d be long dead if I wasn’t looking out for myself.” Eddie crossed his arms and glared.

“Not the time for it guys.” Mike cut in gently. “Richie, it’s not weak to accept help from others. That’s what we want to do. Help you.”

“I don’t need help.” Richie insisted. “I’m fine. I didn’t have a panic attack, alright.”

“We literally saw it.” Stan was trying to help but he and Richie clashed heads too much for it to be a viable option at the current time.

“Yeah well...you suck.” Not Richie’s best work but Eddie still felt like laughing, though it was washed away quickly by concern for his friend.

“R-Richie, do you think Eddie is weak for having p-p-panic attacks?” Bill asked.

“No, course not.” Richie huffed. “What kinda stupid question is that?”

“Then why do you think you’re w-w-weak for having them?”

Richie froze. Literally. Eddie almost thought time had stopped around the boy. Everything seemed to go quiet as Richie struggled to comprehend what Bill had just said to him.

“I don’t think I’m weak because I didn’t have a panic attack.” Richie said finally, trying to sound confident and arrogant.

“You did.” Ben insisted. “We wanna help.”

“I don’t need anyone’s stupid help!” Richie yelled, scrambling to his feet only to fall fight back over. His legs were still shaking quite violently which had left him as unsteady on his feet as a baby giraffe. Eddie longed to hold him again, if only to provide him with much needed comfort and reassurance.

“We’re all a bit scared after what happened.” Beverly tried, smiling kindly at Richie.

“Speak for yourself! I’m not!” Richie refused to lower his voice.

Eddie sighed. He knew what he had to do and he didn’t like it one little bit.

“Beep beep Richie.”

Instantly, Richie whimpered.

He honest to God whimpered. Richie Tozier did not whimper. He didn’t whimper or whine. Sure he complained and connived but he certainly never went so far as to vocalise his fears in anything other than snarky comments.

Eddie hit him again, softer this time. He didn’t think it was the best thing to be doing but there wasn’t time to do this properly. If Richie didn’t realise that he was hurting, then he’d just end up in even more pain.

“What?” Richie reached up to press a hand against the spot where Eddie had hit him. “I...”

“It’s those words. It said them to you, didn’t It?” Eddie summoned all his courage and took Richie’s hands again. “Used them as a taunt, used them to get in your head.”

“N-no, I...” Richie was at a loss for words for once.

“Tell me the truth.” Eddie begged. “We’re friends. You owe me it.”

Richie bowed his head. “Yeah...It did. In the crack house. I...it was horrible to hear It say it, to tell me to shut up in a way where It really meant it. It never wanted to hear me again. It wanted to kill me. I was so fucking scared.”

“Oh, Richie.”

“Hey!” Richie tugged one of his hands free to tug at his hair nervously. “Don’t go feeling sorry for me. I’m fine. I’ll get over it.”

“None of us are over what happened.” Bill wrung his hands together. “W-why do you think you s-s-should be the exception?”

“Because...” Richie hesitated, staring anxiously at Bill as though he was trying to non-verbally communicate something to him. “Because I want to be brave for you guys. I wanna show you that we can move on from this. I wanted to be nice for once, and make you all feel better.” Here, he laughed weakly. “Guess I fucked that up as well.”

“No.” Eddie shook his head. “You’re not a fuck up.”

“Tell that to my parents.” Richie muttered.

“Can you tell us about them?” Beverly asked suddenly.

“About who?” Richie stared at her in suspicion.

“Your parents.”

“Why?”

“Because it helps if you share it.” Beverly reached up to brush a hand against her messily cropped hair. “I told Ben and it made me feel heaps better.”

“You told one person, not the whole fucking club.” Richie snapped.

Eddie knew his parents were a sore spot and rarely ever pressed the boy for information. He knew it’d either make him miserable or grumpy and Eddie didn’t want to. He knew the others avoided the topic as well. It must really help to share in order for Bev to insist on Richie revealing such personal matters.

“Please.” Bev said. “We can help. You can’t keep bottling things up.”

“I can’t.” Richie hissed.

“Why not?” Mike asked, genuinely curious.

“I don’t wanna talk about myself.” Richie hung his head.

“There’s a first.” Stan said, not exactly kindly but not in a mean way

either.

"It told me to shut up in a way that used to mean 'take a breather and give us a five minute rest' and I hate that." Richie said miserably. Eddie knew exactly how he felt. "And it got me thinking that maybe I should shut up."

He paused to swallow.

"Forever."

"Richie no!" Eddie burst out. "Don't listen to that fucking clown! It knows jack shit. You can't just stop talking. It's who you are."

"I..."

"Tell us something." Bill chimed in. "Go on Richie. Say something. We wanna h-hear what you have to s-say."

"I...I wanna get a dog one day. I think it'd be cool." Richie started off slow. "I could take it for runs and it would sleep in my bed with me. But mum and dad won't let me get one. Sucks, hey? Oh and did you see that graffiti at school? I think it was meant to be Batman but it looked more like Australia to me. It's the cowl, I reckon. Made it wider and bamn, you got yourself one fine looking Australia. I threw a rock down a sewer the other day. I know It's not down there but it made me feel better. Might do it more often. Good way to release anger.

"I really wish I'd kept that baseball bat I hit It with. Would make a nice souvenir. I could hang it on my wall so I could remember the time I saved all your lives. Kinda nice moment, don't you think. Sure I was shit scared but probably just a little less than you guys. Or maybe a lot more...I guess. It's true...I'm terrified all the time after what happened. It was kind of easy to be brave in the moment because I love you guys but now...I'm just tired and scared. I don't feel like myself anymore. And maybe I'm overcompensating a little with the talking but it's all I'm good at."

Here, he looked up nervously. His glasses slipped down over his nose and his hair flopped in his face. It wasn't the usual Richie Tozier look

but by God was Eddie happy just to be able to see his friend and hear him speak.

“Hey Richie.” Eddie felt himself smile. “Keep going.”

Author's Note:

Well this is the worst thing I've ever written but I'm too miserable to care. I hope you like it despite the flaws. Please leave a kudos or comment if you did.